Of Topping the Plant.

"This operation, simply, is that of pinching off with the *thumb nail** the leading stem or sprout of the plant, which would, if left alone, run up to flower and seed; but which, from the more substantial formation of the leaf by the help of the nutritive juices, which are thereby afforded to the lower parts of the plant, and thus absorbed through the ducts and fibres of the leaf, is rendered more weighty, thick, and fit for market. The qualified sense of this term is applicable to certain legal restrictions founded upon long experience, and calculated to compel an amendment in the culture of this staple of the Virginia trade, so that it shall at all times excel in foreign markets, and thus justly merit a superior reputation. I do not exactly recollect the present limitation by law, which has changed, I believe, with the progress of experience; but the custom is to top the plant to nine, seven, or five leaves, as the quality and soil may seem most likely to bear.

Of the Sucker, and Suckering.

"The *sucker* is a superfluous sprout which is wont to make its appearance and shoot forth from the stem or stalk, near to the junction of the leaves with the stem, and about the root of the plant; and if these suckers are permitted to grow, they injure the marketable quality of the tobacco by compelling a division of its nutriment during the act of maturation. The planter is therefore careful to destroy these intruders with the thumb nail, as in the act of *topping*, and this process is termed *suckering*.

"This superfluity of vegetation, like that of the top, has been often the subject of legislative care; and the policy of supporting the good name of the Virginia produce has dictated the

* "Many of the Virginians let the thumb nail grow long, and harden it *in the candle*, for this purpose: not for the use of *gouging* out people's eyes, as some have thought fit to insinuate."

wisdom of penal laws to maintain her good faith against imposition upon strangers who trade with her. It has been customary in former ages to rear an inferior plant from the sucker which projects from the root after the cutting of an early plant; and thus a *second* crop has been often obtained from the same field by one and the same course of culture; and although this scion is of a sufficient quality for smoking, and might become preferred in the weaker kinds of snuff, it has been (I think very properly) thought eligible to prefer a prohibitory law, to a risk of imposition by means of similitude.

"The practice of cultivating *suckers* is on these accounts not only discountenanced as fraudulent, but the constables are strictly enjoined *ex officio* to make diligent search, and to employ the posse comitatus in destroying such crops; a law indeed for which, to the credit of the Virginians, there is seldom occasion; yet some few instances have occurred, within my day, where the constables have very honourably carried it into execution in a manner truly exemplary, and productive of public good.

Of the Worm.

"There are several species of the worm, or rather *grub* genus, which prove injurious to the culture of tobacco; some of these attack the root, and some the leaf of the plant; but that which is most destructive, and consequently creates the most employment, is the *horn* worm, or large green tobacco worm. This appears to me to be the same species with that which Catesby has described in the second volume of his Natural History of Carolina, p. 94, under the title *eruca maxima cornuta*, or the great horned caterpillar.

"'This caterpillar,' says he, 'is about four inches long, besides the head and tail; it consists of ten joints, or rings, of a yellow colour; on the head, which is black, grow four pair of